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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Edward Eytchison
Application No. 10/763,869
Filed: January 22, 2004
Attorney Docket No. Sony-05000

: ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed September 11, 2008, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

This application became abandoned for failure to file a timely response to the "Notice under 37 CFR 1.251—Pending Application" mailed August 25, 2005, which set a shortened period for reply of three month from its mailing date. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) were available. The notice required applicant to file a duplicate copy of an Information Disclosure Statement and References that was first filed February 7, 2005. No response was received within the allowable period and the application became abandoned on November 25, 2005. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed April 18, 2008.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3).

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

[1] As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."[4]

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"[5]
"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency."[6]

The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[7]

The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[8] Nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[9]

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[3]Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")

[4]Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

[5]Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

[6]Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

[7]Id.

[8]See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

[9]See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawarness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts that the Notice of Non-Compliant Amendment was not received.

With regard to item (3) above, the aforementioned argument of petitioner in support of petitioner's belief that the above-cited application was unavoidably abandoned is not persuasive. The reasons petitioner's argument must necessarily fail are addressed below.

Petitioner states that the IDS and references were resent to the USPTO on September 14, 2005, and that was the last communication petitioner had with the USPTO until January 23, 2007, when petitioner was informed that the IDS was still not of record and the papers were sent again. Notwithstanding, the application became abandoned by operation of law on November 26, 2005, yet petitioner delayed filing the instant petition for almost three years. As a successful petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) requires that petitioner demonstrate that the entire delay—beginning from the due date for the reply to the filing of a grantable petition was unavoidable petitioner must explain the delay in filing the instant petition. The renewed petition must establish that the entire delay in responding to the "Notice under 37 CFR 1.251—Pending Application" was unavoidable.

In the alternative, petitioner may consider filing a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment based on the premises that a timely response was sent to the Office and received. See MPEP 711.03. The petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment does not require that petitioner that entire that delay in filing the petition was unavoidable, but petitioner must only establish that a timely response to the Office communication was filed. There is no fee for the petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

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specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

Telephone inquiries regarding this decision should be directed to the undersigned (571) 272-3222.

Kenya A. McLaughlin
Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions